SUMMARY OF THE AḤKĀM OF ṢALĀT AL-JAMĀ'AT

According to the rulings of



المرجع الديني الأعلى سماحة آية الله العظمى

الحاجّ السّيّد عليّ الحسينّي السّيستانيّ

His Eminence Āyatullāh al-Uẓma al-Ḥāj as-Sayyid 'Alī al-Husaīnī as-Seestānī

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DEDICATION

The printing of this booklet was made possible due to the help of caring donors. We request the reader to recite a Sūrah al-Fāṭiḥa in the memory of the following deceased brothers and sisters:

قَالَ رَسُولُ اللهِ (صَلَّ اللَّهُ عَلَيْهِ وَ آلِهِ وَ سَلَّمَ):

اُفٍّ لِكُلِّ مُسْلِمٍ لاَ يَجْعَلُ فِي كُلِّ جُمْعَةٍ يَوْماً يَتَفَقَّهُ فِيهِ اَمْرَ دِينِهِ وَ يَسْأَلُ عَنْ دِينِهِ.

The Prophet of Allāh, peace be upon him and his family has said:

"WOE UPON THAT MUSLIM WHO DOES NOT ALLOCATE (AT LEAST) ONE DAY A WEEK TO THE STUDY OF THE DETAILS OF HIS RELIGION AND TO EXPLORE (THE AFFAIRS) OF HIS RELIGION."

Biḥar al-Anwār, Volume 1, Page. 176

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Foreword

This booklet is an simple guide for those who wish to have an elementary knowledge concerning the rules of Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at. The rulings compiled herein are by no means exhaustive, however, they are enough to enable a person to join and complete his or her prayers correctly. The rulings are in accordance with the "Islamic Laws" according to the rulings of Āyatullāh al-Uẓma al-Ḥāj as-Sayyid 'Alī al-Husaīnī as-Seestānī, may Allāh protect him.

We pray that this short work helps the believers in their attempts to understand and participate in the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, and that they are able to benefit from the knowledge contained in this booklet.

We would also like to extend our thanks to the donors who made it possible to have this booklet printed – may Allāh (SWT) reward them amply for their contribution to this noble project.

Islamic Humanitarian Service
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بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

اَلْحَمْدُ للهِ الَّذِي لاَ يَبْلُغُ مِدْحَتَهَ ٱلْقَائِلُونَ وَ لا يُحْصِي نَعْمائَهُ ٱلْعَادُّونَ وَ لاَ يُؤَدِّي حَقَّهُ ٱلْمُجْتَهِدُونَ الَّذِي لَيْسَ لِصَفَّتِهِ حَدٌّ مَحْدَودٌ وَ لاَ نَعْتٌ مَوْجُودٌ وَ ٱلصَّلاَةُ وَ ٱلسَّلاَمُ عَلى مَوْلاَنَا وَ مُقْتَدَانَا أَبِي ٱلْقَاسِمِ مُحَمَّدٍ وَ عَلى أَهْلِ ٱلبَيْــتِهِ ٱلْطَيِّبِينَ ٱلطَّاهِرِينَ لاَ سِيَّمَا بَقِيَّةُ اللهِ فِي ٱلأَرْضِيِينَ وَ لَعْنَةُ اللهِ عَلى أَعْدَائِهِمْ أَجْمَعِينَ إِلىٰ قِيَامِ يَوْمِ الدِّينِ.

The Meaning of Ṣalāt al-Jamā’at

Ṣalāt al-Jamā’at means praying in congregation, with one person leading. The person who leads is called the Imām, while those who follow him are called the Ma’mūm or Ma’mūmīn (plural). As for the daily prayers, the minimum amount of people needed is two - one Imām and one Ma’mūm. For the Ṣalāt al- Jumu’ah (Friday) there must be a minimum of five people, including the Imām.

There is no Ṣalāt al-Jamā’at for the Mustaḥab Ṣalāt with the exception of Ṣalāt al- Istisqā’, or the invocation for rain; and for the Ṣalāt of ‘Eid, which are offered on the day of ‘Eid al-Fiṭr and ‘Eid al-Qurbān, which are mustaḥab during the time of occultation of the 12th Imam (may our souls be sacrificed for him).

The Importance of Ṣalāt

The Ṣalāt is the most important act of worship in Islām, and if it is accepted by Allāh (SWT), then all other acts of worship are accepted as well. However, if the Ṣalāt is not accepted, then all other actions also will not be accepted. It has been narrated from the 6th Imam, Ja’far ibn Muḥammad as- Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, quoting his forefathers up to the Messenger of Allāh, peace be upon him and his family, that he said:

لَوْ كَانَ عَلى بَابِ اَحَدِكُمْ نَهْرٌ فَاغْتَسلُ مِنْهُ كُلَّ يَوْمٍ خَمْسَ مَرَّاتٍ هَلْ كَـــانَ يَبْقَى عَلى جَسَدِهِ مِنْ الدَّرْنِ شَيءٌ؟ اِنَّمَا مَثَلُ الصَّلاَة مَثل الْنَهْرِ الَّذِي يَبْقَـــى كُلَّمَا صَلَّى صَلاَةً كَانَ كَفَّارَةٌ لِذُنُوْبِهِ الاَّ ذَنْبٌ اَخرَجَهُ مِنَ الإيْمَان مُقِيمٌ عَلَيْـــهِ.

(بحار الأنوار ٨٢:٢٣٦)

"If there was a stream at the house of any one of you in which he washes himself five times a day, will there remain any dirt on your body? Verily, the likeness of the Ṣalāt is the same as the stream. The person who establishes the ritual prayers clears out his sins thereby, except for the sin that takes him out from the faith that he believes in." (Biḥār al-Anwār, Vol. 82, Pg. 236)

The Importance of Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

In Islām, perhaps there is no other Mustaḥab act that carries such benefits and results as Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at. As for the importance of it, we quote one narration in which it has been mentioned that:

- If two people form a Jamā'at, the reward for one Rak'at will be equal to one hundred and fifty prayers.
- If there are three people, the reward for one Rak'at will be equal to six hundred prayers.
- If there are four people, the reward for one Rak'at will be equal to one thousand two hundred prayers.
- If there are five people, the reward for one Rak'at will be equal to two thousand four hundred prayers, and such does the reward multiply, that if there are more than ten people in the Jamā'at, then if all the skies were paper, all the seas were ink, all the trees were pen s, and all the men, Jinn, and Angels got together as scribes to record the reward of one Rak'at, they would not be able to do it.

In the same narration, it is mentioned that the Takbīr (Allāhu Akbar) that the believers say after the leader of the Ṣalāt is better and more beloved to Allāh that sixty thousand Ḥajj and 'Umrah, and better than this world and all that is in it – sixty times over! Each Rak'at that the believer performs in Jamā'at is better than offering one hundred thousand dinārs in charity to the poor, and his sajdah is better than if he was to free one hundred slaves.

It has been emphatically recommended that all obligatory Ṣalāt, with special emphasis on Ṣalāt al-Fajr, Maghrib and 'Ishā be offered in

congregation. More stress has been laid upon those who live in the neighbourhood of a Masjid, and upon those who can normally hear the Aḍhān from their homes.

It is therefore, reprehensible to underestimate or ignore Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, and according to the Islamic rulings, it is not permitted to keep away oneself from the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at unduly, nor is it proper to abandon it without a justifiable excuse.

It is further Mustaḥab to wait for some time until the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at begins with the intention to participate in the Ṣalāt, since a short congregational Ṣalāt is better than a prolonged Ṣalāt offered alone. It is also better to wait for the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at to be established, even if it is offered after the prime time rather than to pray alone. In fact, if a person realizes that the Ṣalāt al -Jamā'at has been established but he has already read his Ṣalāt, it is Mustaḥab to repeat the prayers again in Jamā'at.

The Arrangement of Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

The Imām of the Jamā'at stands in front of those who are following him. The followers are beh ind him, forming straight lines - each standing close to the other one's shoulders. As for the distance between the rows, according to Iḥṭiyāt Mustaḥab, it should be just enough to allow the person to perform Sajdah.

When there are only two people in Ṣalā t al-Jamā'at, the Imām and the Ma'mūm, then it is Mustaḥab that the Ma'mūm position himself just behind the Imām on his right side, although, he can also stand in line with the Imām. When there are many followers, according to Iḥtiyāṭ Wājib, the followers must not stand beside the Imām , rather they must be behind him.

The standing place of the Imām compared to that of the Ma'mūm should not be higher than the span of four closed fingers. But the place where the followers stand could be higher than that of the Imām. Of course, the height must be reasonable enough to maintain the appearance of Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at.

There must not be a large distance or obstruction between the Imām and the Ma'mūm. If the Ma'mūm is standing exactly behind the Imām, then his foreh ead in Sajdah should fall just behind the feet of the Imām. Similarly, there must not be any gap or obstruction between the lines.

If during the course of the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, a person finds that he is distanced from the preceding line by a foot or more, then since he is

isolated from the Jamā'at, he should change his intention from Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at to Furadā' (single prayer) and continue his prayers as such.

The Disciplines of Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

For the Imām: the Imām must consider the fact that some of the participants in the Jamā'at may be weak or aged, and as such, he should avoid lengthy Surahs, Qunūt, Rukū', and Sujūd. His pace must be moderate so as to suit followers of all ages.

In those Ṣalāt in which the Surahs are to be read aloud (Ṣalāt al-Fajr, Maghrib and 'Ishā), the Imām is expected to raise his voice so as to become reasonably audible (heard by the followers).

When the Imām in Rukū' learns, that a newcomer wishes to join the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, it is Mustaḥab for him to prolong his Rukū' to twice his usual duration, and then get up without waiting for another one who might want to join in.

For the Ma'mūm: The lines should be straight, with each person standing close to another - shoulder to shoulder. As long as there is a gap in any one line, that spot should be filled before making a new line, and it is Makrūh for a person to stand alone. It is Mustaḥab that after the line:

قَدْ قَامَتِ الصَّلاَةَ

is read, the followers rise and get ready to start the Ṣalāt. It is Makrūh for the followers to recite any of the supplications, Tasbīḥ or Takbīr, in such a way that the Imām can hear them. When a Ma'mūm wishes to join the Imām in Rukū'; but fears that the Imām may rise before he can join, he can make a polite appeal by saying:

يَا اللهُ or إِنَّ اللهَ مَعَ الصَّابِرِينَ

signaling to the Imām that he wishes to join. After the signal, he should not waste any time and join otherwise it might inconvenience the other participants. He should then pronounce the Takbīratul Iḥrām loudly so the Imām becomes aware that the appellant has joined.

The Qualifications of the Imām of Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

One who leads the prayers is called the Imām, and he must be:

1. Bāligh (Adult) meaning that he has attained the age of responsibility and puberty; and fo r Men, it is one who has completed 15 lunar years, or has seen in himself the signs of puberty or adulthood.
2. Sane (‘Āqil)
3. Shī’a Ithnā ‘Asherī (believes in the mastership of the ***12 Imāms***)
4. ‘Adil (Just) meaning that he does not commit the major or minor sins .
5. Legitimate birth.
6. Able to recite correctly.

A woman can lead the Ṣalāt only if all the followers are women; however, if all of the followers are men or there is a congregation of men and women, then the Imām must be a man.

How to Join Ṣalāt al-Jamā’at

Make the niyyat (intention) that you are praying behind and following the Imām who is leading the Ṣalāt. It is not necessary to know his name, however, you should know that you are following that particular Imām. Your Ṣalāt will not be counted as Ṣalā t al-Jamā’at if you do not make the intention of following the Imām – this is important.

The follower must say the Takbīratul Iḥrām (اَللّٰهُ اَكْـــبَرُ) after the Imām, so as to maintain his Ṣalāt al-Jamā’at.

Listen to the Imām

In the first two Rak’at, th e Imām will read Sūrah al-Fāti ḥa and one more complete Sūrah of the Holy Qur’ān. If you are praying the Ṣalāt of Fajr, Maghrib and ‘Ishā, then the Imām will be reciting these Sūrahs out loud, thus, you should keep silent, and listen to his recitation. In the Ṣalāt of Ẓuhr and ‘Aṣr, the Imām will be reciting in a quiet whisper and you will not recite anything out loud, however, it is Mustaḥab that you recite any Ḍhikr of Allāh such as:

(١) اَسْتَغْفِرُ اللّٰهَ (٢) اَلْحَمْدُ لِلّٰهِ (٣) سُبْحَانَ اللّٰهِ (٤) اَللّٰهُ اَكْبَرُ

(٥) اَللّٰهُمَّ صَلِّ عَلٰى مُحَمَّدٍ وَّ آلِ مُحَمَّدٍ

Recite Everything Else in Jamā'at

Apart from the two Surahs which the Imām alone will recite, you must independently recite all the other things in the Ṣalāt. You must pray the Ḍhikr of Rukū, Sujūd, Tashahhud, Salām, and all the Takbīrs, etc.

So remember, that a Ma'mūm is exempted from reading only the two Surahs in the first two Rak'at.

Follow the Imām

As was previously mentioned, the Ma'mūm must say the Takbītatul Iḥrām (the first (اَللهُ اَكْبَرُ)) after the Imām has said it. If you say it simultaneously with the Imām or before, then there will be no Jamā'at for you.

Then, in every act, follow the Imām. When the Imām goes into Rukū' Sujūd, or rises, do it either with him or after him; but do not precede him. This is important as far as the acts are concerned. However, in the case of the recitations like the Ḍhikr in Rukū', Sujūd, Qunūt, etc., you may precede the Imām, even the Salām to complete the Ṣalāt.

If you forgetfully rise from Rukū' or Sujūd before the Imām, you must return to the Rukū' or Sajdah position (as the case may be) provided that the Imām is still in that position.

When Can You Join Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at?

You can join the Ṣalāt at any stage before the Imām rises from Rukū'. After the Imām has risen from Rukū', you will not be able to join him until he stands for the next Rak'at.

You can not join the Imām while he is in Sajdah, nor can you join when the Imām stands up after completing the Rukū'.

Some common Questions

Q. *Can I join when the Imām is reciting the second Sūrah?*
A. Yes.

Q. *Can I join when he is in Qunūt?*
A. Yes, you can join, and perform the Qunūt as well.

Q. *How do I join when the Imām is in Rukū'?*
A. Make your intention, say the Takbīratul Iḥrām and go straight into Rukū'. This will be counted as your first Rak'at.

Q. *How can I join when the Imām is in the third or fourth Rak'at?*
A. In the third or fourth Rak'at, the Imām does not usually read Sūrah al-Fātiḥa nor is there a second Sūrah, he will usually recite Tasbīḥātul 'Arbah. Therefore, if you join him while he is standing, you must read at least Sūrah al-Fātiḥa – you can not simply keep silent. Therefore, if you believe that you will be able to read at least Sūrah al-Fātiḥa before the Imām goes into Rukū' and rises, you may join while he is standing. However if you believe that al-Fātiḥa may take a longer time to read and that you may miss the Rukū' with the Imām, then do not join while the Imām is standing. In this case, join him when he goes into Rukū'. It is always advisable to join the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at in Rukū' if the Imām is in the third of fourth Rak'at.

Q. *If I joined Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at in the third Rak'at of the Imām, then what do I read in the next Rak'at which will be my second, but the Imām's fourth?*
A. You will treat it as your second and read Sūrah al-Fātiḥa and another Sūrah, and do your best to reach the Imām while in Rukū'. If you find that there would not be enough time for the second Sūrah and Qunūt, then Sūrah al-Fātiḥa alone will suffice.

Q. *Should my Ṣalāt be the same as the Imām's?*
A. No, you can pray Ṣalāt al-Maghrib, for example, behind an Imām who is leading Ṣalāt al-'Ishā, and vice versa.

Q. *What happens if a young child is standing in one of the rows? Does our Ṣalāt become void?*
A. No, as long as the child is a Mummayiz, meaning he can distinguish between good and bad, and as long as the people around him do not have knowledge if his Ṣalāt has become void, their Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at is correct.

Late Joiners

It is Mustaḥab to be present in Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at from its very start. If fact, there is a great reward in being able to say the Takbīratul Iḥrām

immediately after the Imām has said it, and before he commences the recitation of Sūrah al-Fāti ḥa.

However, if due to some unavoidable circumstance, you reach late, then you will read as many Rak'at of Jamā'at as available, and complete the balance on your own.

For example, if you reach Ṣalāt al-'Aṣr when the Imām is in his second Rak'at, then you will join, and when the Imām is in his last Rak'at, you will change your Ṣalāt to Furādah (single), and complete the remaining one Rak'at alone.

When it is your first Rak'at and the Imām's second, then according to Iḥtiyāṭ, after the two Sajdah, you must sit in a position, flexi ng your legs, keeping fingers and feet on the ground, and listen to the Tashahhud being recited by the Imām (this position is referred to as Tajāfī).

Similarly, when it is the last Rak'at of the Imām but you still have the balance to complete, it is Mustaḥ ab that you flex your legs with your fingers and feet still on the ground and wait until the Imām has finished reciting the Salām and then stand up to complete the Ṣalāt alone.

When a person arrives so late that he finds the Imām is in his last Tashahhud, he would still be able to obtain the reward of Jamā'at. He should make the intention, say the Takbīratul Iḥrām and sit to join the Tashahhud. Then when the Imām has completed his Ṣalāt with the Salām, he should rise to begin the first Rak'at and he does not have to make the intention or say the Takbīr again.

Connections in Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

The first person standing directly behind the Imām in Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at is connected to the Imām and so are the people next to him. However, as the first line extend s, people standing further away from the Imām are connected sideways.

Connections must always be maintained in Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, for if it breaks, then there will be no Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at. For example, if a person standing in the second, third or any subseq uent line loses all connection with no one in front of him or by his sides, his Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at ceases to exist, and he must continue his Ṣalāt by means of Furādah. However, if he has someone by his either side who is in turn properly connected with someone else in front, then his Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at will be valid.

If anyone is praying Ṣalāt al- Qaṣr, he should try to avoid standing in the first line, since if he chooses to remain seated after two Rak'at, he will

become an obstruction to the people connected to him, rendering their Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at invalid and void. However, if he immediately rises again to join Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, then the connection will be resumed and no harm is done to the other believers around him.

If a traveler prays in the second or any subsequent line, no harm will be done to the believers standing next to him even if he remains seated after the completion of two Rak'at. This is because people in the subsequent lines normally have more than one source of contact and connection.

Emergencies in Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

A. If the Imām's Ṣalāt becomes void due to any reason, the Ma'mūm behind him may steadily step forward to lead, provided that he fulfills the qualifications for leading the Ṣalāt. Other followers will change their intention to fo llow the new Imām.

   If no one goes forward to continue the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, then the followers will convert their Ṣalāt to Furādah and complete the Ṣalāt on their own.

B. If someone faints or collapses during the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, then the people standing n ext to him may break their Ṣalāt to attend to him, provided that there is no one else to help him from amongst those who have not joined the Ṣalāt.

C. If the Ṣalāt of anyone in the first line becomes void, he must get out of the line immediately. He must neither continue nor sit down, since it will be a distraction, and may render the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at of the others following him in the same line as void. When he moves out, there will be a gap, and thus the other people next to him must gradually move sideways to reduce or fill in the gap.

D. If for any reason, the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at ceases to exist, the Ma'mūm must not break their Ṣalāt, they must simply change the intention from Jamā'at to Furādah and continue until completion.

E. If due to some reason, the Ma'mū m has to abandon the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, then he can do so and change to Furādah. However, one cannot join the Jamā'at with an intention of later breaking it.

Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at for the Muslim Sisters

Muslim women may join Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, but they wil l keep their position behind the men. Although in Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at, no obstruction between the Imām and Ma'mūm is permitted, the women are permitted to stand behind barriers such as a partition, wall, curtain, etc. and be part of the Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at. Th e women are also permitted to have their own Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at in which a lady Imām can lead – as long as there are only women in the Jamā'at. However, she will not stand in front, but will position herself in the center of the first line, and those follow ing her will form the first line by standing by her sides.

A Few Narrations Concerning Ṣalāt al-Jamā'at

1) The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, said: "Verily, when one of Allah's servants establishes the Ṣalāt in congregation and asks Him something which He does not grant him, Allāh will be ashamed until He fulfills it."

2) Imām 'Alī ibn Mūsā al-Riḍā, peace be upon him, said: "The excellence of the congregation Ṣalāt compared to a solitary Ṣalāt, is one Rak'at to two thousand Rak'at."

3) The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him and his family, said: "One prayer of a man in congregation is worthier than his forty years of prayers at home (alone)."

4) Imām Muḥammad al-Bāqir, peace be upon him, said: "The person who abandons the congregation (Ṣalāt) without having an excuse, and only for unwillingness or in order to avoid attending the gathering of Muslims, has no Ṣalāt (his Ṣalāt will not be accepted)."

5) Once a blind man came to the Prophet of Allāh, peace be upon him and his family, and said that there was not anyone to take him to the Masjid to attend the congregational Ṣalāt with him (the Prophet), when he heard the call to prayer. The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him said, "Stretch a rope from your house upto the Masjid and attend the congregational Ṣalāt."

و الحمد لِلّهِ ربّ العالمين